A

SERMON

Occaſioned by the

DEATH

OF THE

Rev^d. Mr. Samuel Wilſon,

Who departed this Life *October* 6,

In the *Forty-eighth* Year of his Age,

PREACHED *October* 14, 1750.

By JOHN GILL, D. D.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DEATH

A

SERMON

[redacted]

ACTS xx. 38.

Sorrowing moſt of all for the word which he ſpake, that they ſhould ſee his face no more.

BEING deſired by you, the brethren and members of this church, to aſſiſt in your ſorrow on account of the death of your late dear paſtor, in which I ſincerely bear a part with you; and no paſſage of ſcripture being left by the deceaſed, nor any given me by his ſurviving relative, or by you, I conſidered with myſelf what would be moſt proper and ſuitable on ſuch an occaſion; I thought of one portion of ſcripture, and of another, but none hung upon my mind ſo much, and continued with me ſo long as the words I have read unto you; and therefore I determined, through divine aſſiſtance, to make them the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

Eliz: Bankes

The words manifeſtly refer to a ſingle expreſſion uſed by the apoſtle *Paul*, in a very moving and pathetic addreſs, delivered by him to the elders of the church of *Epheſus* at *Miletus*, where he had convened them for that purpoſe; but before I enter into a particular conſideration of them, I ſhall take leave to make ſome few remarks upon the addreſs itſelf; and the rather, as it will not lead us out of ſight of the text, but will open to us the true ſource of the ſorrow expreſſed in it, and furniſh us with reaſons accounting for it. And,

1. The apoſtle obſerves what was his conſtant work and employment whilſt he was in *Aſia*, and his manner of performing it, ver. 18, 19. His work was *ſerving the Lord*; not himſelf and his own belly; not ſeeking to gratify his ſenſual luſts, or to acquire riches and honour to himſelf, as the falſe teachers did; he was no time-ſerver or man-pleaſer, for then he would not have been the ſervant of Chriſt; but he ſerved the Lord, Jehovah the father, in the goſpel of his ſon, with all his heart and ſoul; and he ſerved the Lord Chriſt by fully and faithfully preaching him, and in ſo doing became the ſervant of the churches for Jeſus ſake. His manner of performing this ſervice was *with all humility of*

mind; for though he was favoured with extraordinary gifts, and was called to an extraordinary office, by which he was ſet not only above common ſaints, but above ordinary miniſters of the word, and was not behind the chief of the apoſtles; yet he was not lifted up with theſe things, but thought himſelf *leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints*; being ſenſible of his own unworthineſs to be employed in ſuch ſervice, and his inſufficiency for it; and well knowing it was by the grace of God he was what he was, and did what he did, he therefore walked humbly before God, and in the ſight of men; not aſſuming a dominion over the faith of any, or lording it over the heritage of God. And it was *with many tears* that he went through his work; he ſowed the precious ſeed of the word in tears, and watered it with them; grieved he often was at the hardneſs, impenitence, and unbelief of many that heard him, and was greatly affected with the troubles of the ſaints, both inward and outward: who was offended or afflicted, and he burned not? and would frequently weep over the ſcandalous lives of carnal profeſſors. And his ſervice alſo was attended with *temptations that befel* him, not only from ſatan, and his own heart, but from a wicked world, and eſpecially *by the lying*

in wait of the Jews, who ſought to take away his life; and which were trials of his faith and patience, and of his courage and conſtancy in the ſervice of his Lord; and now a miniſter ſo conſtant and laborious, ſo humble, ſo compaſſionate, and ſo ſelf-denying, is it to be wondered at that ſorrow ſhould be felt and expreſſed at parting with him?

2. The apoſtle goes on to take notice of the ſubject-matter of his miniſtry, or of what he chiefly inſiſted upon in it, ver. 20, 21. In general it was what *was profitable*, ſuitable, and convenient for them. He did not amuſe his hearers with philoſophical notions, or read lectures of mere morality to them, or deliver out ſpeculative notions in divinity; but he taught them ſolid and ſubſtantial truths, the doctrines of the everlaſting Goſpel, the wholeſome words of our Lord Jeſus, ſuch as men are nouriſhed up with unto everlaſting life; things profitable for doctrine and inſtruction in righteouſneſs; even ſuch doctrines as relate to the knowledge of the divine being, Father, Son, and Spirit, to the ſtate and condition of man by nature, as a fallen creature, and to his recovery both by redeeming and efficacious grace: and of theſe things he *kept back nothing*; he did not with-hold them either in whole or in part, nor did he with-

draw

draw or fetch back, as the word [a] uſed may ſignify, what he had before ſaid to them; but abode by it, and pronounced an anathema on ſuch who preached any other goſpel than what had been preached and received already; and this he *ſhewed* unto them, and made it clear, plain, and evident; and *taught* them it *publickly, and from houſe to houſe*; firſt publickly in the *Jewiſh* ſynagogue, then in the ſchool of *Tyrannus*, chap. xix. 8, 9, 10. and in whatſoever public place of worſhip the people met together; and alſo privately in their own houſes; which ſhows his diligence, and induſtry, and concern for their ſpiritual welfare; and what he taught in the one place, and in the other, was uniform and all of a piece. In particular, the doctrines he chiefly inſiſted upon, or the whole of his miniſtry, was reducible to theſe two heads, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus.* God, againſt whom man has ſinned, is the object of the one; and Chriſt, who is the Redeemer and Saviour, is the object of the other: repentance muſt be toward God; it lies in a true ſenſe of ſin, and godly ſorrow for it, in ſhame and bluſhing at it, and in owning and forſaking it, flowing from a view of the love of God, and of pardoning grace and

[a] Υπεστειλαμην. See Heb. x. 38, 39.

and mercy thro' Chriſt, attended with faith in him, and hope of ſalvation by him: faith has Chriſt for its object; and it is a believing in his perſon, blood, righteouſneſs, and ſacrifice, a looking to him, leaning on him, truſting in him, and expecting grace, life, and ſalvation from him. Theſe two doctrines went together in Chriſt's miniſtry, and are what he ordered his diſciples to teach, and which they did, endeavouring firſt to bring men to a ſenſe of ſin, and then encouraged them to believe in Chriſt: and this is the uſual order in the Spirit's work upon the ſoul through the miniſtry of the word, firſt to convince of ſin, then to work faith in the heart, and take of the things of Chriſt, and ſhew and apply them to their ſouls for their peace and comfort: and theſe doctrines were taught by the apoſtle without reſpect to perſons, he teſtified them *both to Jews and Greeks*; and now a miniſter who made it his buſineſs to deliver out ſuch intereſting truths, doctrines of ſuch moment and importance to the ſouls of men, and was ſo faithful and diligent herein, is there not good reaſon that thoſe to whom he had miniſtred ſhould be filled with ſorrow and trouble, and ſhew deep concern of mind at his departure from them?

3. The apoſtle declares the view he had of what ſufferings he was to endure for the ſake of the Goſpel, and which was not at all diſcouraging to him, ver. 22, 23, 24. He ſays he was going *bound in the ſpirit unto Jeruſalem*; not in his own ſpirit, as being bound in conſcience to perform a piece of ſervice he had undertook to do to the poor ſaints there from the *Gentile* churches; and much leſs as if he was compreſſed, and ſtraitned, and uneaſy in his mind at what he was to ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*, for this would be contrary to what he after ſays; but in and by the Spirit of God, by which he was moved to go up to *Jeruſalem*, notwithſtanding the perſuaſion of his friends to the contrary, and what he ſhould endure there; by which he knew he ſhould be put in bonds there; and by the revelation of the Spirit he ſaw it as clearly as if he was bound already. Yet *not knowing the things that* ſhould *befal* him *there*: that is, other things beſides bonds, which are after excepted; or whether thoſe would iſſue in death there or elſewhere; as yet this was not made known unto him: *ſave that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſed in every city, that bonds and afflictions abode* him, or waited for him. This he knew not only from the common lot of Chriſt's miniſters, and his own experience,

but

but from the Holy Ghoſt in the prophets, which were in every city where there was a church; who were all in this tone, having a ſpirit of prophecy in them, that he was going to endure great ſufferings for the ſake of Chriſt and the Goſpel; or the Holy Ghoſt in himſelf teſtified before hand to him of his ſufferings, aſſuring him that in every city he came unto, and particularly in *Jeruſalem*, perſecution and affliction would attend him; and which, by the way, is no inconſiderable proof of the deity of the bleſſed Spirit. *But none of theſe things moved* him from his intended journey to *Jeruſalem*, which he was reſolved upon; nor from preaching the Goſpel as he went along; nor did they diſturb and diſtreſs his mind; neither did he *count* his *life dear unto* himſelf, than which nothing is dearer to men. *Skin for ſkin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for his life*[b]. Yet this he made no account of; he did not value and regard it; he was willing to lay it down, ſo that he might but *teſtify the Goſpel of the grace of God*; or bear a teſtimony to it, which he was willing to do both by life and by death; even to that Goſpel, which is a declaration of the love, grace, and mercy of God, which aſſerts ſalvation to be all of grace, and is the means of

[b] Job ii. 5.

of conveying and implanting the grace of God in the hearts of men; and in ſo doing fulfil *the miniſtry* he had *received of the Lord Jeſus*; and which he had, as alſo gifts for it, as well as a commiſſion to enter upon it, and execute it; and by all which he would *finiſh* his *courſe*, the race of his life, and courſe of his miniſtry *with joy*, as he did; for a little before his death he could ſay [c], *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous judge, ſhall give me at that day.* Now who could forbear ſhedding tears at parting with ſuch a brave and courageous miniſter of the Goſpel, ſo undaunted at ſufferings, ſo willing to lay down his life for the ſake of the Goſpel, and the dear intereſt of the Redeemer?

4. The next thing obſervable in this moving ſpeech, is the apoſtle's ſolemn appeal to thoſe to whom he addreſſed himſelf for his faithfulneſs in the miniſtration of the Goſpel to them, ver. 25, 26, 27. which is introduced after this manner; he tells them, that he *knew*, and was aſſured, and which therefore was not a mere conjecture of his, but he had it

[c] 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

it by revelation, that none of them *all*, meaning not only thoſe before him, but all the chriſtians in *Aſia*, *among whom* he had *gone preaching the kingdom of God*; the kingdom of the Meſſiah, the kingdom of grace and glory, more eſpecially the latter, and the things appertaining to it; as what is a man's meetneſs for it, regeneration by the ſpirit of God; and what is his right unto it, the juſtifying righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and what the glories of it, which are in ſome meaſure brought to light by the Goſpel; all ſuch perſons to whom he had preached theſe things in *Aſia*, he affirms, ſhould *ſee* his *face no more*; which was the cutting wounding ſtroke, which touched them to the quick, pierced to the very heart, and ſet them weeping and ſorrowing as they did. And this is the word referred to in our text. Upon which he calls them to bear witneſs that day, that he was *pure from the blood of all men*; he had acted the part of a faithful watchman in giving warning from the mouth of the Lord; he had laid before men their ſtate and danger; he had truly repreſented their condition to them; he had told them, that without repentance towards God, and faith in Chriſt, they would die in their ſins; he had pointed out the only way of life and ſalvation by Chriſt unto them,

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ſo that they would not periſh for want of knowledge and the means of it; nor was he any ways acceſſary to their ruin; their deſtruction was of themſelves; their blood was upon their own heads; he had nothing to anſwer for, he had faithfully diſcharged his duty to them: *for*, ſays he, *I have not ſhunned to declare to you all the counſel of God*; not the ſecret purpoſes and decrees of God, thoſe counſels of old which are faithfulneſs and truth, which are only known by prophecy, or by the diſpenſations of Providence; but the Goſpel-revelation, and the whole ſcheme of it, which is the produce of divine wiſdom; this he fully made known to all to whom he miniſtred, ſo that they, as well as *Timothy* [a], knew fully his doctrine as well as manner of life: he made uſe of no artful methods to conceal his principles, no ambiguous phraſes, or words of double, or doubtful meaning; he renounced all ſuch hidden things of diſhoneſty, and by manifeſtation of the truth, commended himſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God: and now is it at all marvellous, that the perſons to whom the apoſtle ſaid theſe things, ſhould have their hearts filled with ſorrow, or that there ſhould not be a dry eye among them, when a miniſter, ſo honeſt

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 10.

and ingenuous, ſo faithful and open-hearted, was taking his leave of them, and eſpecially when they are told, that they ſhould ſee his face no more?

5. Next follows the preſſing exhortation of the apoſtle, ver. 28, 29, 30, 31, to the elders of the church at *Epheſus*, to *take heed* to themſelves; to their doctrine, that it be agreeable to the word of God, and to their converſation, that it was becoming the Goſpel of Chriſt: *and to all the flock*; the whole church of God, and every member of it, and watch over them, and preſerve them from the error of the wicked: *over the which the Holy Ghoſt* had *made* them *overſeers*; by beſtowing gifts upon them, qualifying of them for ſuch an office, and inclining their hearts to take the overſight of them chearfully; and which is an argument why they ſhould be careful of them, *to feed the church of God*; with wholſome food, with the ſubſtantial truths of the Goſpel, which hold forth Chriſt and his grace, as the bread of life, and water of life; and the rather they ſhould look upon themſelves under obligation ſo to do, ſince Chriſt who is God over all, bleſſed for ever, has purchaſed this flock or church, not with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, but *with his own blood*; which is exceeding precious, and of great value and efficacy,

efficacy. And the reaſon why the apoſtle was ſo importunate, and ſo preſſing in this matter, was, becauſe he knew by divine revelation, that *after* his *departing* from hence, or by death, *grievous wolves*, falſe teachers, wolves in ſheeps cloathing, fierce, ravenous, and greedy ones, would *enter in among* them privily; *not ſparing the flock*; but fleecing and worrying it; yea, not only ſuch ſhould enter from without, but even of themſelves, out of their own community, there ſhould riſe up men *ſpeaking perverſe things*; contrary to the ſcriptures, to the Goſpel, and things very pernicious to the ſouls of men, whereby they would *draw away the diſciples after them*; make rents and ſchiſms in the church, form new parties, and ſet up themſelves at the head of them: now of this the apoſtle had warned them inceſſantly for the three years laſt paſt, in the moſt tender and preſſing manner, even with tears, which he deſires them carefully to remember. And can it be thought that ſuch an affectionate ſervant of Chriſt could be parted with, without tears ſhed for him, who had ſo great a regard both to the preſent and future well-being of the church, to which theſe elders belonged?

6. In the moſt affecting manner he takes his farewel of them, ver. 32. commending

them

them *to God*; to his grace to ſupply and ſupport them, to his wiſdom to direct them, and to his power to preſerve and keep them: *and to the word of his grace*; either the written word, the ſame with the Goſpel of the grace of God, to make it the rule and ſubject of their miniſtration; or Chriſt the eſſential Word, who is full of grace and truth; each of which, both God, and his word, were *able to build* them *up* on their moſt holy faith, and carry on and finiſh the work of grace upon their ſouls, and make them uſeful to build up others on the rock of ages; and when they had done their work, *to give* them *an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified*; both a meetneſs for, and a right unto the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, that fades not away, and is reſerved in the heavens, and will be only enjoyed by ſanctified perſons; for 'tis an inheritance of the ſaints in light. And the whole ſpeech is concluded with the apoſtle's declaration of his being free from the ſin of covetouſneſs; for the truth of which he appeals to the perſons preſent, and exhorts them to imitate him; provide for themſelves, and ſupport others; to which he animates them by the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ver. 33, 34, 35. and then cloſes all in prayer to God with them, and for them; upon which they all burſt out

into tears, and lift up their voice and weep, and one after another fall upon the apoſtle's neck and kiſs him, ver. 36, 37. A moſt moving ſcene this! It is hard to form juſt and adequate ideas of it, and ſtill more difficult to expreſs them in proper language; I cannot do it better than in the words of a very ſpiritual and affectionate commentator[e] on the place, who repreſents it in the following manner. "How can I part with this "dear creature, this bleſſed *Paul*, ſaith one, "in whom my life is in a manner bound up? "Farewel, my dear friend, ſaith another, a "thouſand thanks to thee, and ten thouſand "to God for thee, and for all the pains thou "haſt taken with me for my good: And "muſt we part? ſaith another, muſt I loſe "my ſpiritual father, nurſe, and guide? "What will become of us now, ſaith an- "other, when we ſhall no more have him "to apply to, and receive direction from? "What ſhall I do, if the Lord take away "my maſter from my head? *My father, "my father, the chariot of* Iſrael, *and the "horſemen thereof.*" And then follow the words I firſt read, *ſorrowing moſt of all for the word which he ſpake, that they ſhould ſee his face no more.* There were ſeveral things in

[e] Mr. Henry in loc.

in this farewel-diſcourſe, which affected them, and filled their hearts with grief and trouble; as what the apoſtle was like to ſuffer for the ſake of Chriſt and his Goſpel, and what ſad havock falſe teachers would make in the church under their care hereafter; but what moſt of all afflicted them was, that they were now juſt going to part with the apoſtle, and ſhould never ſee him more. What I ſhall further do with theſe words, will be,

I. To conſider what that is which chiefly and principally affects and afflicts a people at parting with a Goſpel-miniſter, which is, *that they ſhall ſee his face no more.*

II. Shew the nature of that ſorrow which is, and may be expreſſed on ſuch an occaſion.

III. Obſerve ſome reaſons which induce ſuch a ſorrow, and which will ſerve to juſtify it when it is within due bounds.

IV. Offer ſome things to conſideration, in order to abate it, on the above account, and to regulate it, and keep it within proper limits.

I. I ſhall conſider what that is, which of all things does moſtly affect and afflict a people at parting with a Goſpel-miniſter, which is, *that they ſhall ſee his face no more.* And let it be obſerved,

I.

1. That there are many caſes which affect, but not ſo much affect as this: as for inſtance, to part with a miniſter for a while, for a few weeks or months, when his urgent affairs call him elſewhere, or his preſence is neceſſary in another branch of Chriſt's intereſt, for the ſervice of it; this is not grateful to a people by whom he is beloved; it is with ſome reluctance he departs from them for a ſeaſon; but then they hope for his return, and, with as much patience as they can, wait for it: had this been the caſe here, it would have been bearable. The ſaints at *Epheſus* had an experience of this before. When the apoſtle was firſt with them, his ſtay was ſhort; they would fain have had him continued longer with them, but he refuſed, which no doubt was grieving to them; but he returned again, and abode with them for the ſpace of two years, and then was obliged to leave them through an uproar, but not without expreſſions of their tender regard to him; they *embraced* him in their arms, and no doubt wept over him: and now a third time he viſits them, by ſending for them at *Miletus*, and tells them, that they ſhall ſee his face no more; had he given ſome hopes of viſiting them again, though he ſhould for

the preſent depart, or ſignified his intentions to do ſo, if it was the will of God, this would have been tolerable; but to aſſure them they ſhould never ſee him again, this cut them to the heart.

Again, to part with a Goſpel-miniſter wholly, to have him removed from one part of a country to another, from one church to another, there to abide, and not return again, this is more affecting and afflicting than the other caſe, but not like this in the text. This may be, and ſometimes is the caſe, that a miniſter does, and lawfully may remove from one people to another; as when errors and hereſies obtain, and they can't be reproved out; or immorality prevails, and no reformation can be made, the diſcipline of Chriſt's houſe is neglected, and the people will not ſuffer his laws to be put in execution; or when a due maintenance is not, or cannot be provided for him, but both he and religion are expoſed to the reproach of the world; or diſaffection between him and the people riſes ſo high, on one account or another, that peace and fellowſhip cannot be maintained, nor the ends of the miniſtration of the word, and adminiſtration of ordinances be anſwered: but then in ſuch a caſe as this, as there

may be ſome perſons to whom he has been a ſpiritual father, or who have received comfort and edification by his miniſtry, and conſequently muſt be greatly troubled and diſtreſſed at his removal from them; ſo they may, if convenience will permit, go along with him; or however they may hope to ſee his face, and hear his voice again one time or other.

Moreover, to have a goſpel-miniſter drove away by the force of perſecution, and removed into a corner, ſo that a people can't behold their teacher in the place where they were wont to ſee him; this muſt be very grieving and diſtreſſing, but not like this, ſeeing his face no more; becauſe in ſuch times of perſecution, they may both ſee and hear him in private houſes, in cellars, and ſolitary places, in fields and woods, as our forefathers did. The witneſſes propheſy, tho' in ſackcloth; and the church is fed and nouriſhed with the word and ordinances, tho' in the wilderneſs: beſides, hope may be entertained, that ſuch a ſtate of perſecution will not laſt always; God will not ſuffer the rod of the wicked always to continue on the lot of the righteous; he gives his churches reſt from adverſity, and they walk in his fear, and in the comforts of his ſpirit, and are edified and multiplied.

For a goſpel-miniſter to be ill treated, reviled, and perſecuted, to be haled to priſon, and laid in fetters and bonds, muſt be very grievous to ſuch to whom he has been uſeful; but this is not like to that, of being in ſuch a caſe as never to ſee his face more; becauſe ſuch, as they have compaſſion on him in his bonds, and ſympathize with him, ſo they may viſit him in priſon, ſee his face, hear his voice, and be the more ſtrengthened in their faith in Chriſt, and in the good ways of God, by his bonds. The caſe of the apoſtle *Paul* is a moſt affecting one, when he was ſtoned by his furious perſecutors, and dragged out of the city, and left for dead, round about whoſe bruiſed and mangled body, and as ſuppoſed, dead, the diſciples ſtood, no doubt ſorrowing and weeping; and yet on a ſudden he roſe up alive and well, and they ſaw his face with pleaſure [f].

When a miniſter of the goſpel is indiſpoſed, and thro' ſickneſs cannot attend his charge and work, it greatly affects a people that love him, and to whom he has been ſerviceable; as the ſickneſs of *Epaphroditus* was diſtreſſing to the *Philippians*, when they heard of it, which cauſed heavineſs in him, who knew it would be ſo to them, tho' it was not unto death [g]: whilſt

[f] Acts xiv. 19, 20. [g] Phil. ii. 26, 27.

whilſt there is life there is hope of ſeeing him again, but when death has done its work, there is no more hope of ſeeing him again in his miniſterial work; and this is the cutting thought. Wherefore,

2. What is the affecting caſe of all, is parting with a miniſter by death, when the eye that has ſeen him, ſhall ſee him no more, in the place it formerly did; and that place in which he has been ſeen, ſhall know him no more: death changes his countenance, alters his face, and the lineaments of it, ſo that it is not to be ſeen as it was before; and he is ſent away, his body returns to the duſt, and the ſpirit to God, that gave it; ſo that his προσωπον, his perſon, as the word alſo ſignifies, is not to be beheld any more. The phraſe here uſed ſuppoſes, that they had ſeen his face, and that with pleaſure; for it is uſed of beholding perſons and things with rapture and joy [h]; ſo a people may, and often do ſee the face of their miniſter in the time of life and health with pleaſure; and eſpecially when in his maſter's work, perſonating his lord, and ſpeaking in his name, they have ſometimes ſeen his face as the *Jews* did *Stephen*'s, as if it had been the face of an angel, and have received and embraced him as an angel of God, even

[h] Θεωρειν. See John xvii. 24. Acts vii. 56.

even as Jeſus Chriſt is; how beautiful are the feet, and much more the mouth and lips of a meſſenger of peace, and publiſher of the glad tidings of ſalvation by Chriſt! but when a miniſter is dead, tho' his face may be ſeen before his interment, yet not without an alteration, and not with joy and pleaſure.

But let it be obſerved, that when the apoſtle told the perſons ſpoken of in the text, that they ſhould ſee his face no more; and they believed him and therefore ſorrowed, it is not to be underſtood as a contradiction to, or a denial of the reſurrection of the dead; the apoſtle knew, and ſo did they, that tho' he would die, and never pay them another viſit; yet he would riſe again in power, in glory, in incorruption, and with a ſpiritual body; and ſo would they, and have the ſame eyes they had, and with them behold, as the God-man and mediator-Chriſt, or Chriſt in human nature, and that for themſelves, and not another, ſo they ſhould ſee each other, and that face to face; but the meaning is, that he would die, and ſhould not riſe again till the heavens be no more, till the Lord ſhall deſcend from heaven with the voice of an archangel, when the dead in Chriſt will riſe

! Acts vi. 15. Gal. iv. 19.

rise first, till the last trumpet sounds, and the dead rise incorruptible and immortal.

3. It may be very well thought, that there is in these words a figure which *Rhetoricians* call a *vitiosis*, by which less is said than is understood, and more is designed than is expressed; and besides, the word here used not only signifies face or countenance, and also person, but all exterior, attending and surrounding circumstances; and so we may consider it as expressing the person of a gospel-minister in every view of him, and in every part of his office, who ceases to be viewed in it when death has done its work. And then,

His people see his face no more in his own house, to which they have at times resorted, to have their cases of conscience answered, their doubts resolved, or advice given them in matters of moment and difficulty. They see his face no more in their own houses; that is, they have no more of his friendly visits; no more his fervent prayers with them, and for them; no more his hearty counsel to them, and feel no more his sympathizing heart with them in their troubles, whether of a spiritual or temporal nature; the weak are no more supported, nor the feeble-minded

comforted by his private inſtructions. They ſee his face no more at their church meetings, there preſiding over them, ſhewing the houſe to the houſe, the form and faſhion of it, the goings out and comings in, and all the laws and ordinances of it; pointing who are to be admitted, and who to be rejected from the communion of the church; directing to every part of diſcipline, and to the rule of God's word for it; exhorting and reproving with all long-ſuffering and doctrine, ſuch ſharply who have erred, that they be ſound in the faith, and ſuch publickly who have ſinned before all; laying on, and taking off cenſures, by the ſuffrage of the church; all which is no more to be ſeen as done by him. They ſee his face no more in the pulpit: they hear no more the ſilver trumpet blown by him, nor the joyful ſound pronounced with delightful accents, nor the meſſages of peace, life, and ſalvation by Chriſt brought by him: they now remember how his mouth ſpoke wiſdom, and his tongue talked of judgment: how their hearts have burned within them, while he has been opening the ſcriptures to them; how he has ſtirred up their minds by way of remembrance of Goſpel-truths, and endeavoured to eſtabliſh them in them;

in what a clear light he has placed them, and with what ſtrength of argument he has defended them; and with what fervency, and in what a preſſing manner he has exhorted them to love and good-works, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. But the cutting thought is, he's gone, and is no more ſeen, nor no more to be ſeen and heard. They ſee his face no more at the table of the Lord, there delivering out the memorials of his ſufferings and death; ſetting forth ſo evidently before their eyes a crucified Chriſt, as if he was juſt then crucified and ſlain among them; pointing to his bleeding ſide and wounds, and directing to his pierced hands, and feet; explaining the divine emblems, as repreſenting the body of Chriſt bruiſed and broken for their ſins, and his precious blood ſhed for the remiſſion of them; inſenſibly, and at an unawares, leading them at once into the heighth, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge; engaging and encouraging their faith and hope in his blood and ſacrifice; ſtirring up their love to him, and exciting them to thankfulneſs to him, and not forget his benefits; ſuch as healing their diſeaſes, and forgiv-

ing their iniquities, redeeming their lives from deſtruction, and crowning them with loving kindneſs and tender mercies. And the thought of this, that they ſhall ſee his face no more, or him concerned in ſuch delightful ſervices, makes their hearts to bleed within them. But,

II. I go on to ſhew the nature of that ſorrow which is, or may be expreſſed on ſuch an occaſion. And,

1. When it is properly expreſſed, and kept within due bounds, it is not criminal, but lawful: it is not in the leaſt ſuggeſted, that the perſons in the text ſinned in doing what they did, nor does the divine hiſtorian leave any cenſure upon them for it. Religion does not ſtrip us of our affections, or deſtroy them, but regulates and directs, to the proper uſe of them [k]; it does not teach us, or form us into, a Stoical apathy, a ſtupid indolence, and brutal inſenſibility: it is neither unmanly nor unchriſtian to weep for deceaſed friends and relations, or for any good man, and eſpecially for the loſs of a Goſpel-miniſter. The God of nature has placed the affections in us for proper uſes, and chriſtianity leads unto

[k] Quare non in eo ſita eſt perfectio fidelium, ut affectus omnes exuant, ſed ut eos ex juſſis tantum cauſſis ſuſcipiant & moderentur. *Calvin. in loc.*

unto them, and aſſiſts in them; it is not counteracting the man, or the chriſtian, to expreſs a proper degree of ſorrow on ſuch an occaſion: perſons of the moſt brave and heroic ſpirits, of the greateſt firmneſs and reſolution of mind, have ſhown a tenderneſs of ſpirit, and have been melted into tears on a like account. The Apoſtle *Paul*, that man of ſpirit, and greatneſs of ſoul, ſuggeſts, that had *Epaphroditus* died, he ſhould have had ſorrow upon ſorrow; ſuch a load of it, as would be ſcarcely bearable: devout men carried out *Stephen*, when dead, to his grave, and lamented over him; and even our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when he ſaw the *Jews* and *Mary* weeping at the grave of *Lazarus*, not only groaned in ſpirit, and was troubled, but wept over him himſelf.

2. Such ſorrow is not worldly, but ſpiritual; there is the ſorrow of the world, which worketh death, a ſorrow which worldly men have, and for the loſs of worldly things; as for loſs of trade, and loſs in trade, and for the loſs of a man that is a good neighbour, and a good cuſtomer; but of this nature is not the ſorrow expreſſed in our text, there was no worldly loſs ſuſtained by parting with the apoſtle; but there was a ſpiritual one, and on that account the ſorrow was: and ſo when a

goſpel-miniſter is removed by death, the ſorrow for him is of a ſpiritual nature; it is becauſe he has been a ſpiritual father to ſome, and has been of uſe for the ſpiritual welfare of others: and a ſorrow on this account is not blameworthy, when it does not hinder the exerciſe of ſpiritual graces, as faith, hope, patience, reſignation and ſubmiſſion to the will of God.

3. This ſorrow was univerſal; as they all wept, they all ſorrowed; there was not a dry eye in the whole aſſembly; it was a general loſs, a loſs to them all, and it occaſioned a general lamentation: ſo the loſs of a goſpel-miniſter is a general loſs, a loſs not only to his family, and to that particular church, and every member of it to whom he miniſtred, but to the whole intereſt of Chriſt: when a great man is fallen in *Iſrael*, all *Iſrael* will be concerned for it; when a prophet dies, there will be a general weeping for him; when *Samuel* the prophet died, all the *Iſraelites* gathered together, and lamented him[1].

4. This ſorrow was very painful; the elders found great pain and uneaſineſs in their breaſts, when they were told by the apoſtle they ſhould ſee his face no more. The word, by

[1] 2 Sam. iii. 38. 1 Sam. xxv. 1.

by which it is here expreſſed, is uſed to ſet forth that anguiſh of ſpirit, and diſtreſs of mind, which were in *Joſeph* and *Mary*, when they had loſt, and were ſeeking for the young child Jeſus; yea, it is uſed of the moſt excruciating torments[m]: the ſenſation here felt, and the ſorrow they were filled with, were like the pains and ſorrow of a woman in travail; by which our Lord ſets forth the ſorrow of the diſciples when he ſhould be taken from them, and they ſhould not ſee his face for a while[n]: and ſuch like ſorrow is occaſioned by the death of a goſpel-miniſter to his people; it is like ſeparating the neareſt relations, huſband and wife, parents and children; it is like plucking the fleſh from the bones, and rending one member from another; ſo exceeding afflicting and painful is it. But I proceed,

III. To aſſign the reaſons which induce a people to ſorrow after this manner, upon the death of a goſpel-miniſter; and which will ſerve to juſtify ſuch ſorrow when it is kept within due bounds. And,

1. The characters which a miniſter of the Goſpel bears, lay a foundation for ſuch ſorrow,

[m] Οδυνωμαι. See Luke ii. 48. and xvi. 24, 25.
[n] John xvi. 19, 20, 21.

now, and furnish our reader for it: he is a *servant of the most high God*, not only by creation, as all men are, and by grace, as every saint is, but by his office as a minister; whose work and business it is to shew unto men the way of salvation: he is *a minister of Christ*, of his appointing and sending, of his calling and qualifying, and whom he owns and makes useful: he is *a steward of the mysteries of God*, and of his *manifold grace*; and if he is faithful, which is required of stewards, and also wise, and gives to every one their portion of meat in due season, as on that account he is highly esteemed and valued in the family, so his loss will be justly lamented. He is *an ambassador of Christ*, personates him, stands in his stead, and speaks in his name, bringing a message, being sent on an embassy of peace, from him: he is a spiritual *guide* and *governour* in the church, whose faith is to be followed, and the end of his conversation considered, which is Christ, the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. And now in proportion to the characters he bears, is the loss of him, and in proportion to the loss of him, is sorrow for him; persons of figure and character, as in the state, so in the church, the death of them is to be lamented.

2. The relations which a gospel minister stands in to his people, are another reason why they do, and why they may sorrow for him after a godly sort, and in moderation, when he is parted from them by death, and they cannot see his face any more: he stands in the relation of a father to them, of a spiritual father to some of them, as he has been the instrument of begetting them again to Christ by the Gospel; so that he is not only an instructor of them, but a father to them; as he also is to the rest that are under his care, he having a paternal affection for them, and a fatherly regard to them: he lays up for them on week-days, as parents do for their children, and then he freely spends it on them on Lord's-days, and most gladly spends, and is spent, for them; though the more he loves, the less is he loved by them. And, O how does he exhort, comfort, and charge them, as a father does his children! and therefore when he is removed from them by death, who can blame them for weeping and crying out, *My father, my father, the chariot of* Israel, *and the horsemen thereof!* Likewise he stands in the relation of a shepherd to them; as he is their father, and they his family, he's their pastor, and they his flock, whom he has willingly took the over-

sight

ſight and charge of; and whom he feeds with knowledge and underſtanding, and watches over, and for their ſouls, that he may give an account of them with joy, and not with grief; and when therefore he is taken from them, can it be otherwiſe, but that they muſt be filled with grief and ſorrow on account of it?

3. The work of a goſpel-miniſter, from which he is taken off by death, is ſuch, that when it is ſeriouſly conſidered, and thoroughly thought of, will juſtly occaſion ſorrow in thoſe among whom he has laboured. His buſineſs is to deliver out the pure Goſpel of Chriſt, to publiſh ſalvation by him, to proclaim peace by his blood, to preach pardon and righteouſneſs through him, and every other important truth; to ſtate and defend the ſame, and to ſhew the influence they have, and the argument they carry in them, to engage to holineſs of life and converſation: and as he is highly to be eſteemed of for his work ſake, and to be accounted worthy of double honour, eſpecially if he labours in the word and doctrine; and if he is a workman approved of God, and that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, as he won't

fail

fail of meeting with reſpect and value from thoſe who love the truth, as it is in Jeſus; ſo when he comes to die, and has done his work, his death will be bewailed for the ſame reaſon, for which he was highly eſteemed in life.

4. The uſefulneſs of a goſpel-miniſter is another reaſon of ſorrow with thoſe to whom his labours of love have been acceptable and ſerviceable. Such an one is made uſe of by the Lord to turn men from darkneſs to light, and from the power of ſatan unto God; to convert ſinners from the evil of their ways, whereby ſouls are ſaved from death, and a multitude of ſins covered; he is a miniſter by whom others believe in Chriſt, and have peace and comfort; the word preached by him is the means by which faith comes, and the holy ſpirit with his ſeveral graces is received. He is a *Boanerges*, a ſon of thunder, to ſome, to awaken and convince them of their ſins, and of their dangerous ſtate and condition by nature; and he is a *Barnabas*, a ſon of conſolation, to others, through whoſe miniſtry their diſtreſſed minds are relieved, their diſconſolate ſouls are comforted, their faith is increaſed, the joy of it furthered, and they are fed, nouriſhed, refreſhed, and edified: when therefore it is the pleaſure of the

Lord to call home ſuch an uſeful ſervant of his, and take him off from his work and uſefulneſs, and eſpecially in the midſt of it, it muſt be very afflicting and grieving, to ſuch particularly, who have received much ſpiritual benefit and advantage by him.

5. It increaſes the ſorrow, when at ſuch a time as this, a goſpel-miniſter is removed, in which there are not many of that character, and ſo ſmall a proſpect of more. The harveſt is great, and faithful and painful labourers are few. There are ſcarce any that naturally care for the eſtate and ſouls of men, and are heartily concerned for their ſpiritual and eternal welfare; all comparatively ſeek their own things, their honour and applauſe from men, their eaſe, reputation, and riches, and none or few the things that are Jeſus Chriſt's, or relate to his honour, glory, kingdom and intereſt in the world; and what adds to the ſorrow is, that there are ſo few riſing up to fill up the places of thoſe that are removed; few that come forth with the ſame ſpirit, and are zealouſly attached to the truths of the everlaſting Goſpel: bleſſed be God, there is here and there one that promiſes uſefulneſs, or otherwiſe the ſorrow and grief, at the loſs of goſpel-miniſters, would be inſupportable.

To all which may be added, that a faithful miniſter of the Goſpel can be very ill ſpared at this time of day, when errors and hereſies of all kinds are rampant among us; it is the laſt day, and there are many Antichriſts in the world, many falſe prophets are gone forth into it; there are many ſaying, Lo here is Chriſt, and lo there, to the great confuſion and diſtraction of the weak and ſimple. Theſe come not in privily, as they formerly did, bringing in damnable hereſies, denying the Lord that bought them, but openly ſpread their poiſon, and declare for their wretched ſchemes with fury and rancour, charitably ſcattering firebrands, arrows, and death; raging waves of the ſea they are, foaming out their own ſhame; there is ſcarce an error or hereſy that has appeared in the world from the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, but what is revived in this; and there is no truth of the Goſpel, but what is oppoſed and denied: and to loſe an able and zealous defender of them, at ſuch a time as this, is a double loſs, and can't fail of affecting the minds of ſuch who heartily eſpouſe the Redeemer's cauſe. But,

IV. Give me leave to offer ſome few things to prevent immoderate ſorrow, to reſtrain

grief, and keep it within due bounds and limits; though it is lawful, and there is cauſe for it, yet care ſhould be taken that it is not exceeded, and even in this your particular caſe, who have ſo lately loſt your dear paſtor. And,

1. Let it be obſerved, that it is the will of God that ſo it ſhould be, and you ought to acquieſce in it; the will of the Lord is done, and it can't be undone: when the diſciples had endeavoured to diſſuade the apoſtle from going up to *Jeruſalem*, and could not prevail, they *ceaſed, ſaying, the will of the Lord be done* [o]: ſo you have been praying and intreating the Lord to ſpare the life of your paſtor, but he has not thought fit to grant your requeſt; and it now becomes you to ceaſe, and be ſtill, and not complain and murmur, ſince the will of the Lord is done; who does all things not only after his own will, but after the *counſel* of it; he does all things well and wiſely, for the beſt, for his own glory, and his people's good; and there is nothing in which you can more imitate Chriſt, and be like unto him, than by reſigning your wills to the will of God, who ſaid [p], *not my will, but thine be done*; you ſhould remember that God is a ſovereign, and muſt be ſubmitted

[o] Acts xxi. 14. [p] Luke xxii. 42.

mitted to: he does according to his will in heaven above, and in the earth below, and none can ſtay his hand, nor ought any to ſay to him, what doeſt thou? Good old *Eli* ſaid, with reſpect to a caſe more afflicting, more diſtreſſing, and more ſevere than yours, *it is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good*[q]; he has a right to do what he will with his own, and he does ſo without giving any account of his matters to the children of men: the Lord gave you your miniſter, and he gave him his gifts for the miniſtry, and all his uſefulneſs was owing to him; and now he has taken him away, and you ſhould be ſtill, and know, own, and acknowledge that he is a ſovereign God, and does as he pleaſes; and with *David* it becomes you to be dumb, and not open your mouth, in a way of complaint againſt him, becauſe he has done it[r].

2. Your miniſter's work was done, which was appointed for him to do. There is nothing that more manifeſtly falls under the decrees and determinations of heaven than a miniſter's life and work; it is appointed of God where he ſhall miniſter, to whom, and how long; how many ſouls ſhall be converted by him, and what comforts ſhall be admi-

[q] 1 Sam. iii. 18. [r] Pſ. xlvi. 10. and xxxix. 9.

adminiſtred thro' his means, and to what length of time he muſt continue in his ſervice. Now there was not one ſinner more to be converted by your miniſter, nor any more comforts to be conveyed to you thro' his hands; all the work that was cut out for him was done by him: but this can't be better expreſſed than in his own words; and becauſe theſe will, in all probability, have a greater influence upon you, and more weight with you, than any thing I can ſay, give me leave to read a paſſage or two out of a diſcourſe*, publiſhed by him. "God, "ſays he, never calls home an uſeful mi-"niſter till his work is done, till every ſinner "is brought in, whom he was in any degree "to be inſtrumental to awaken, convince, "or direct to Jeſus; and till every ſaint is "ſo far inſtructed, edified, and comforted "by him, as was ſettled and agreed in the "divine counſels, when God was pleaſed "to determine and appoint, that he ſhould "be called to labour in his vineyard. —— "And as all the names of the elect are par-"ticularly ſet down in the Lamb's book of "life, ſo under-ſhepherds are ſent forth by the "great Lord of the harveſt, who, as he aſſigns "them their work, ſo he has ſettled every cir-

* The bleſſing of a Goſpel-miniſtry, &c. p. 30, 32, 33, 34.

" circumſtance relating to it; how long each
" ſhall be employed, and when he is to be
" removed to make way for a ſucceſſor?
" how far he ſhall be owned, and ſucceeded;
" what temptations and difficulties will at-
" tend him; what diſcouragements he will
" meet with, and how he ſhall be ſupported
" and carried thro' it, in the midſt of all op-
" poſition, till his warfare is accompliſhed,
" and his work is finiſhed.——We are ready
" to entertain hard thoughts of God, con-
" tinues your dear Paſtor, and to open our
" mouths againſt heaven, when he is pleaſed
" to take away a miniſter whom we valued,
" in the bloom or meridian of life, eſpe-
" cially if he is called off when we think
" he was beſt furniſhed for, and had the
" greateſt run of ſucceſs in his work; not
" conſidering that one reaſon why he was
" ſo very uſeful, whilſt with us, was, be-
" cauſe his work was to be cut ſhort in
" righteouſneſs, and his ſtay upon earth
" limited to a few years: 'tis not ſo material
" how long miniſters are continued with
" us, as how uſeful they are to us, whilſt
" that is our mercy. God can eaſily diſ-
" patch a great deal of work by his ſervants,
" in a little time; and if he is then pleaſed
" to diſmiſs them, the advantage is theirs

" by

" by being taken the ſooner to regions of " everlaſting reſt and triumph. ——— This " ſhould ſerve then, adds he, to ſtill our " murmurings, and huſh our complaints, " even tho' we ſhould loſe a miniſter dear- " er to us than the apple of our eye: let " us remember he had his particular work " to do, that now his work is finiſhed and " compleated; and when this is the caſe, " what can be more merciful than for a faith- " ful ſervant to enter into the joy of his " Lord?"

3. The reſidue of the ſpirit is with the Lord; Chriſt your aſcended Lord and King has received gifts for men, yea for rebellious ones; and he has a fulneſs of them in his hands, which he can give, if he pleaſes, to others to fit them for the work of the miniſtry; that they may be uſeful for the perfecting or gathering in of the ſaints, and for the edifying the body the church: inſtead therefore of mourning over the death of your Paſtor, eſpecially in an immoderate way, be praying to the Lord of the harveſt to ſend a faithful labourer into this part of his vineyard; and who knows what a bleſſing is in reſerve for you? your *Elijah's* gone, it may be, a double portion of his ſpirit may fall upon

upon ſome *Eliſha* or another, who may be ſent to you.

4. Remember that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the head of the church, lives, and will live for ever more, to protect, defend, and provide for you; though your ſpiritual father is gone, your everlaſting father, on whoſe ſhoulders the government of the church is, continues; tho' the under-ſhepherd is removed from you, the chief and great ſhepherd, and biſhop of your ſouls is ſtill the ſame, yeſterday, to-day, and for ever; an everlaſting friend, that ſticks cloſer than a brother. And moreover, tho' the fathers, where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever? no; they do not, yet the word of God lives and abides for ever: the goſpel is an everlaſting goſpel, and there will be men to preach it to the end of the world. Chriſt has promiſed his preſence with his miniſters ſo long, which ſuppoſes that they will be continued to the end of all things. Chriſt has, and ever will have a ſtanding-miniſtry in the world, until all his elect are gathered in, and theſe are come to the unity of the faith, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

5. It ſhould be obſerved by you, that what is your loſs, is your miniſter's gain;

he is taken away perhaps from evil to come; he is safe housed before the storm falls upon the churches and ministers of Christ, which seems to be gathering thick; and can you be sorry for that? could you have seen the saint when he entred into the joy of his Lord, clad with robes of immortality and bliss, how he was received into the father's presence, embraced in the arms, and laid in the bosom of Jesus, and the spirit of glory resting on him; could you now view him, as you have reason to believe he is, inheriting the throne of glory, with the crown of righteousness on him, encircled with the glorious forms of angels and fellow-saints made perfect, it would surely bid you wipe off your tears, and dry your eyes. To all which I would only add, that tho' you'll see his face no more in this world, which is the cause of your present sorrowing, you'll see it in another; he'll rise again in the resurrection of the just, and you that believe in Christ will rise too, when the dead in Christ shall rise first; and then he and you will meet, and both the Lord, and be for ever with him; with which words you should comfort one another. Your minister will appear at the head of you, to whom he has been a spiritual father, and

you'll

you'll be then his joy and crown of rejoicing; he'll look upon you with pleasure, and you'll see his face to great advantage, which will then be as the face of an angel, and shine like the sun in the father's kingdom: *for they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever*[t]. Thus have I gone thro' what I proposed; and there is nothing remains now but to give you the character of my deceased brother, and your Pastor, which I suppose is expected from me: and here I want the eloquence of the deceased to paint him out in his proper colours, and to describe him as the accomplished man, the real christian, and excellent minister. Something I shall attempt to do, and you that knew him most intimately, will supply the rest in your minds, from your own observation.

The Revd. Mr. *Samuel Wilson*, descended from godly ministers of the denomination of Protestant Dissenters, both by father and mother's side. He was the son of the Revd. Mr. *Ebenezer Wilson*, a worthy minister of Christ in this city; whose father also was an eminent preacher of the Gospel, at *Hitchin*,

[t] Dan. xii. 3.

in *Hertfordſhire*; and as he had a religious, ſo a liberal education. His *grammar* and claſſical learning, he received under ſome of the beſt maſters of it [u], in this city; his academical ſtudies he went through, under the direction of Dr. *Ridgley* and Mr. *Eames*, under whom he made great advances in polite and uſeful literature; with which being furniſhed, he ſhone out and made that figure in the church and world, he afterwards did.

His natural parts were very quick and ſtrong; he had great vivacity of ſpirit, a lively fancy and imagination, a retentive memory, a penetrating mind, and a ſolid judgment; which, with the above advantages of humane literature, and above all having the grace of God beſtowed upon him, and ſpiritual light and knowledge given him in the myſteries of the Goſpel, made him the great man he was.

He was favoured with many preſervations and providential deliverances, in his infancy and younger years, when life was in danger; which he has remarked with his own hand [w], as expreſſive of the tender care of providence over him; and no doubt the Lord ſaved him, in

[u] Dr. *Hayes*, an eminent Clergyman, and Profeſſor *Ward* of *Greſham-College*.

[w] In a bloody-flux; when cut near the eye by a catſtick; when ſwimming in a mill-pond——wading through a river once and again, *&c. MS. penes me.*

in order to call him by his grace, reveal his Son in him, and make him an able minister of the New Testament.

He received his first serious impressions, under the ministry of the late Revd. Mr. *Daniel Wilcox*, an eminent minister of the *Presbyterian* denomination in this city; as he himself relates in a discourse[x] he published on occasion of the death of that minister, upon the same words which I have been treating of: and that he was truly a partaker of the grace of God, was not only the judgment of the church to whom he first gave up himself, but will easily be admitted by all good men that have known him, heard him, or read him. And it was your happiness as a church, that you had such a minister, who himself had tasted that the Lord was gracious: an unregenerate ministry has been the bane of the established church, and is like to be the ruin of the Protestant dissenting interest.

Tho' the father and grandfather of our deceased brother were both of the *Baptist* denomination, yet it was not this that determined him to become of the same persuasion himself; besides, his father dying when he was young, he was under another influence; and

[x] The blessing of a Gospel-ministry, &c. p. 3.

and when he entered upon the enquiry about baptiſm, no one, he himſelf ſays, could enter into it with a more earneſt deſire, to find truth on the ſide of the common practice, all his converſation and proſpects leaning ſtrongly that way; but, upon taking the method which he did to ſearch the ſcriptures, collect the whole evidence from them, and conſider every part ſeparately, he found himſelf obliged to conclude the ballance was greatly on the ſide of adult-baptiſm by immerſion; and therefore determined to comply with his duty, and on the cloſeſt reflection never ſaw reaſon to repent of it[y]: this enquiry, or which he calls a *ſcripture manual*, was publiſhed a little before his death, and is worthy the peruſal of every ſerious enquirer into truth; and by which, and other printed performances of his, tho' dead, he yet ſpeaks.

After he was fully ſatisfied in his mind about the point of baptiſm, he joined himſelf with the church, then under the paſtoral care of the Rev^d. Mr. *Edward Wallin*; and when he had finiſhed his ſtudies, was called forth by that church to the work of the miniſtry, into which he came not only with the entire approbation of that church, but with great acceptance to the public: he was ſoon called to

[y] See his *Scripture Manual*, p. 3, 39.

to be an assistant to the Revd. Mr. *John Noble*, in whose meeting-place * a Lord's-day evening lecture was opened for him, where he preached to a crouded audience: he came forth even at first with clear evangelical light, with great warmth, zeal, and fervency of spirit; and like another *Apollos*, with a torrent of eloquence, being mighty in the scriptures; all which recommended him to all sorts of people, and made him exceeding popular.

After some time, you, this church of Christ, being destitute of a pastor, called him to take the pastoral care of you, which he accepted of, and was solemnly invested with the office of a pastor, elder, or overseer, many ministers assisting in that service, who, all rest from their labours, excepting my self; this, I think, was about five or six and twenty years ago. His ministry among you has been greatly owned to the conversion of many sinners, and to the comfort and edification of you all present, as well as of many that are gone to glory before him. The low estate in which you were, when you came to this place, and the numbers of which you consist, and the flourishing condition in which you now are, abundantly shew the success of his ministration, among you;

* *Tallow-Chandlers Hall.*

you; notwithſtanding the breaches, which by one providence, or another, have been made upon you; his popularity continuing to the laſt.

Need I deſcribe him as a preacher to you, who, at leaſt many of you, have ſo long ſat under his miniſtry; his mien and deportment in the pulpit was grave and venerable; his geſture graceful; his addreſs very moving and pathetic; his language ſtriking; his diſcourſes ſpiritual, ſavoury, and evangelical; having a tendency to awaken the minds of ſinners to a ſenſe of ſin and danger, and to relieve and comfort diſtreſſed minds: he was indeed an eloquent preacher, and a warm defender of the peculiar doctrines of the chriſtian religion; and in one word, laborious, indefatigable, and ſucceſsful; not a loiterer, but a labourer in the Lord's vineyard; as in his public work, ſo in the more private duties of his office, viſiting the church and members of it, without reſpect of perſons; fervent in his prayers for them, and with them; hearty in his advice unto them, and unwearied in doing any ſervice for them he undertook. And let me not forget, and I am perſuaded you will not eaſily forget his conduct at your church-meetings, where he preſided, becoming his character

character and office; what authority he uſed when neceſſary; what prudence in all things; what patience in bearing with the infirmities of the weak, and it may be ſometimes the rudeneſs of ſome, and the inveſtives of others; what lenity to offenders; what compaſſion to back-fliders; what reluctance to paſs the awful ſentence on the incorrigible, and with what tears in prayer he would weep over ſuch unhappy profeſſors!

His gift in prayer was very remarkable and extraordinary; with what fulneſs of matter, freedom of mind, and fervour of ſpirit, as well as pertinency of expreſſion, and propriety of language, would he pour out his ſoul before God, and wreſtle with him; what a compaſs would he fetch, and reach every caſe, both private and public; and not only expreſs the ſenſe of his own heart, but that of others that joined with him in a better and fuller manner, than they could do it for themſelves.

He was affable and courteous in his behaviour to all men, of a chearful ſpirit, his converſation pleaſant, profitable, entertaining, and uſeful: which made him generally beloved by all ſorts of perſons. In ſocial life, he

was the tender husband, the affectionate father, and the faithful friend.

In his last illness he was seized at first with such a stupor, as rendered him very little conversible during the whole time; so that nothing of his gracious experience could be taken from him, only some broken words and expressions now and then were dropped by him, which shewed him to be in a spiritual frame: but from a small manuscript, written by him in health, I shall give a few extracts, in which he not only expresses his sense of mercies, temporal and spiritual, but observes the gracious dealings of God with him, and his experience of his divine favours. I have had, says he, "many sweet visits of "his love, especially in secret, and at his "table. God, in Christ, adds he, I hope "is my portion, his providence my defence, "and his good Spirit my guide and com-"forter." And in another place, he expresses his sense of the corruption of his heart, the infirmities of his life, his faith and hope in a bleeding Saviour, and his desires after unspotted purity and holiness; he complains of "a polluted, proud, peevish heart, prone "to atheism, folly, and every evil — and of

"a

" a life tarniſhed with many blemiſhes, ſad " indiſcretions, and heart-breaking ingrati- " tude — ſurely, ſays he, God hath hardly " done more for any, nor any left to do more " againſt him! — then expreſſes an hope " limited to a bleeding mediator — and con- " cludes, bleſſed day that will bring perfect " purity." Which day is come to him, and has brought it to him. A word or two more, and I have done.

To you the mournful widow of the deceaſed, give me leave to ſay, your loſs is indeed great; you have loſt a kind and indulgent huſband; but remember Chriſt your ſpiritual huſband lives; and from him, and his love, you can never be ſeparated; put your truſt in him, he'll never leave you nor forſake you. To you his dear offspring, whom he moſt affectionately loved, you have loſt one who has been, and ſtill would have been, the guide of your youth, and conſtant monitor; follow his example, remember his inſtructions; ſhun the pleaſures of ſin, and the vanities of this world; flee youthful luſts; ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, and ſerve your father's God, and things will be well with you. And to you this church of Chriſt, among whom he has

miniſtred many years, I would only ſay, abide by the truths he preached to you; imitate him in every thing praiſeworthy, and of good report; you have loſt your ſhepherd, keep cloſe to one another, and not ſcatter and ſtray from the fold; preſerve the order and diſcipline of Chriſt's houſe; ſeek peace and purſue it, unite in your counſels, be frequent and fervent in prayer; and I doubt not but in due time, God will ſend you a paſtor to feed you with knowledge, and with underſtanding.

F I N I S.